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SECURITY INFORMATION
REPORT NO.

COUNTRY East Germany

TOPIC Military Information from Letzling Heath

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EVALUATION

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REFERENCES

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ENCLOSURES (NO. & TYPE)

REMARKS

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1. On 21 September 1953, a major field exercise was started from the Buch-Luederitz-Dolle-Angern area, with the first training phase lasting until 3 October and followed by a rest until 5 October. The exercises were opened by heavy air force operations in the area south of Stendal where, on three successive days, 12 jet fighters and about 26 single-engine fighters were observed. No heavy bomber units were noticed. Air activity was concentrated in the area of Buch, with 8 single-engine fighters in the air all the time. The first phase terminated in the area of Schoenwalde. No combat firing was heard. The second training phase started on 5 October and extended over the Schoenwalde-Tangerhuetten-Burgstall-Dolle area as far as Letzling Heath. After 6 October, heavy tank, artillery, AT artillery, and infantry combat firing and the noise of blastings was heard from the Letzling Heath. Most of the

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Contrary to last

exercise, no telephone lines were laid this year.

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that the first training phase included an Elbe River crossing near Buch, the establishment of a bridge head and a subsequent break through and that the second phase included contact with strong enemy forces. believed that heavy ammunition was used in the final phase of the exercise in Letzling Heath. 2

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2. On 5 October, the cantonment, including the new temporary barracks buildings, south of the Gardelegen-Stendal road, between the villages of Lichtsprunge and Boergitz, were occupied to capacity by about 6,000 troops. 3 On 15 October, an engineer training site west of Schernebeck in Letzling Heath half way the Dolle-Kolbitz line, which about as far as the Letzlingen-Dolle road, was vacant and was temporarily occupied. Units were permanently stationed in brick buildings and low, temporary wooden barracks buildings, near Kolbitz.

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3. At about noon on 6 October, a column of 32 trucks towing 3 x 122-mm howitzers passed through Schoenwalde toward Stendal. [redacted]

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At about 9 a.m. on 8 October, truck columns were seen en route toward Scherneck. They included 8 trucks [redacted] towing guns and carrying ammunition and gasoline, 12 trucks [redacted] and another 8 trucks also loaded with ammunition and gasoline. On 13 October, 15 trucks [redacted] and without load passed through Schoenwalde toward Tangerhuetten. 2

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4. On 27 September, a train with trucks and AT guns stood in Stendal, with the locomotive facing west. At about 7:45 a.m. on 29 September, 7 tanks and about 20 trucks were loaded in Jaevenitz. At about noon on 29 September, about 20 SP guns stood ready to be loaded at the Jaevenitz railroad station. 4 The following columns were observed passing through Poergitz toward Stendal:

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Between 11 a.m. and 12 p.m. on 7 October. About 200 trucks, 16 artillery pieces on two-axle carriers, 12 heavy mortars, apparently of 160 mm, and 6 medium AT guns, apparently of 57 mm. [redacted]

At about 8:45 a.m. on 8 October. About 24 trucks including 10 with troops wearing black-bordered crimson epaulets, 2 field kitchens, and several sedans with covered numbers, carrying officers. [redacted]

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At about 9:10 a.m. on 8 October. About 40 trucks carrying troops and luggage and including two trucks with billeting equipment and 2 signal trucks. [redacted]

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On 10 October. Twenty-four trucks with 2 artillery pieces and 4 mortars. [redacted]

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Another column of 42 trucks with 2 light AT guns, 2 mortars and 2 field kitchens. Four of the trucks were armed with heavy machine guns, while the other trucks carried troops who wore black-bordered crimson epaulets. [redacted]

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At 12:30 p.m. on 10 October. Twenty-one motor vehicles including 3 personnel carriers and towing 4 AT guns. One of the personnel carriers was occupied by uniformed women wearing black-bordered crimson epaulets. [redacted]

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On 13 October. Three-axle trucks [redacted] towing artillery pieces and carrying equipment, 3 trucks [redacted] carrying troops wearing red-bordered black epaulets and equipment and 6 other trucks [redacted] carrying billeting equipment.

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5. A column of 24 empty trucks [redacted] and drivers wearing red-bordered black epaulets was seen en route toward Gardelegen. [redacted]

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6. On 13 October, the larger part of the camp in the woods southeast of Jaevenitz was vacated by the troops and some of the tents had already been removed. At about noon, many sedans and trucks stood ready for departure and troops cleared the low, temporary barracks buildings. 3
7. The road near Uchtsprunge had been blocked for road construction work. Although the off-limit signs were no longer there after early October, source was not positive whether the construction work was completed. There was unusually intensive traffic of individual vehicles from 7 to 14 October. On the afternoon of 14 October, 60 to 70 trucks loaded with equipment were en route toward Stendal. 3
8. On 3 October, only little engineer equipment including beams and boards and a small vehicle were seen at the Polte water training site. two landing stages, each about 4 meters long. The barriers at the road in the woods between Polte and Bittkau had been removed.
9. On 3 October, the camp in the woods north of Polte was only lightly occupied. The sentries on the road from the camp to Bittkau, about 300 meters off the camp, had been withdrawn. About 20 soldiers engaged in athletic exercises were seen in the camp. No equipment or motor vehicles were noticed. were seen leaving the camp and driving along the Bittkau-Scheren(sic) road toward Tangerhuetten. 5
10. On 3 October, no Soviet troops except for the district komendatura were stationed in Tangerhuetten.
11. On 10 October, the camp southeast of Jaevenitz was occupied by tank and infantry units which latter were smaller in number than in the summer. The tents were still there. About 20 soldiers, 8 sidecar motorcycles and truck were seen in the camp. 3
12. Between 7 and 13 October, no loadings and shipments were observed at the Haldensleben railroad station. On 14 October, 3 officers and 50 soldiers wearing red-bordered black epaulets boarded the regular train at 8:20 a.m. toward Magdeburg. Between 14 and 16 October, no loadings, shipments or troops were observed. From 9 a.m. until noon on 15 October, artillery firing was continuously heard from the direction of Hillersleben.
13. At 12:30 p.m. on 12 October, 15 trucks loaded with equipment and 10 radio trucks passed through Burg from the direction of Genthin and proceeded toward Magdeburg. 2
14. At about 1:30 p.m. on 12 October, the road from Ferchland toward Kietznick was blocked by a barrier and guarded by a sentry with black-bordered crimson epaulets. Two batteries of 122-mm field howitzers, facing west, were in firing position 1 km north of Kietznick, at the border of the woods west of the road to Jerichow and had their limbers parked in the woods east of the road. Two heavy artillery pieces displaced on the Jerichow-Genthin road, just south of Jerichow, and 10 heavy AT guns with prime movers were emplaced in the Elbe Meadows about 1.5 kilometers southwest of Jerichow. Infantry occupied the west side of the Jerichow-Kietznick road. Vehicular traffic was intensive on the Jerichow-Genthin road. Soviet troops conducted a defense exercise

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at the Elbe River with subsequent withdrawal toward Genthin. At about 4:30 p.m., about 25 trucks, 12 heavy AA guns and several trailers moved along the Tangermuende-Fischbeck road, turning off toward the south in Fischbeck. [] Camouflaged motor vehicles were parked in the woods southwest of Langensalzwedel. A column of about 15 trucks [] drove along the Tangermuende-Stendal road. On 12 October, 12 flatcars stood ready to be loaded at the Tangerhuetten railroad station. Boxes ready to be loaded guarded by sentries wearing red-bordered black epaulets and black-bordered crimson epaulets stood at the ramp. Between 5 and 7 p.m. on 12 October, about 100 trucks with AT guns and mortars crossed the northern road bridge toward east. Thirty trucks including 12 with light AAA, 9 with AA machine guns, 4 radio trucks and 2 field kitchens crossed the bridge toward the same direction at about 10 p.m. 2

15. On 15 October, no Soviet troops were observed in the area of Wolmirstedt, Kolbitz, Born, Salchau and Jaevenitz. However, rutted roads and furrowed terrain as well as dummy soldiers, foxholes and damaged wooden dummies indicated that tank practices had been conducted in this area. Forest workers and residents [] tank units had practiced there, stating that firing was intensive. They said that, since about four weeks, there had, however, been no exercises. Nor did they see any troops:

1. [] Comment. [] probably refers to field exercises of the Third Shock Army which were conducted in the area of the northern sector of Letzling Heath and in the Rathenow - Jerichow- Genthin area from 27 to 30 September. Since the start and completion of the field exercises were definitely indicated by arrival and departure movements, it is rather improbable that the exercises should already have begun on 21 September and terminated not until 3 October. There is, however, the possibility that the movements to and from the training area were made under realistic conditions, [] exercises were concerned. Air force operations were also not observed prior to the period indicated above. On the basis of conclusions made in [] Comment 2 of the present report, it is assumed that, besides headquarters units of the army, only units of the IX Mtz Rifle Corps (except for the 18th Mecz Div), of the 10th Gds Tank Div and about one third of the units of the 7th Gds Tank Div participated in the exercises. According to information available so far, the exercise may have started with the assembly of units of the IX Mtz Rifle

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Corps in the northern sector of Letzling Heath and east of this area from 23 to 26 September, followed, on 27 September, by an attack upon an enemy party defending west of the Elbe River by forces assembled east of the Elbe River and a subsequent river crossing from east to west, probably at Buch. After 30 September, the maneuver may have ended with the departure of the units of the corps from Stendal and south of Stendal and of the units of the 10th Gds Tank Div from the Pahlwinkel-Tangerhuetten area. Both the movements to the loading stations and the loading procedure, prolonged by the concentration of troops, may have provoked the impression of exercises.

- 25X1A 2. Comment. The present and previous information on troops and movements in the northeastern sector of Letzling Heath and in the area of Jerichow and south of Jerichow makes it appear possible that field exercises were conducted in this area, starting about 5 October and terminating about 12 October. 25X1A
- According to statements and observations from the posts of Stendal, Hillersleben and Magdeburg as well as from Camps Born and Jaevenitz in Letzling Heath, the exercises may have been held by units of the LXXIX Mtz Rifle Corps. 25X1A
- 25X1A Comment. No definite indications as to the course of the practice were obtained. It is known, however, that the major forces of the corps were south of Stendal, west of the Elbe River, and that only small elements were in the area of Jerichow, east of the Elbe River, thus, allowing the conclusion that the exercise included a river crossing. It is, at any rate, believed probable that the main phases of the exercises were conducted west of the Elbe, in the eastern and north-eastern sector of Letzling Heath. Indications of the exercise terminating about 12 October were return movements such as the clearing of the camp southeast of Jaevenitz on 13 October, the assembly of a troop train in Tangerhuetten on 12 October, the movement of a column, presumably with units of the 19th Gds Mecz Div, toward Magdeburg on the same day and the return of units of the division to the barracks installations in Magdeburg via the Herrenkrugbruecke (bridge). Since no tanks were observed with the units involved, the exercise may have chiefly been an artillery practice.
- 25X1A 3. Comment. It is believed that, upon completion of the exercises of the LXXIX Mtz Rifle Corps, the camp southeast of Jaevenitz has finally been vacated by units of the 207th Mtz Rifle Div after 13 October. Confirmatory information from Stendal is still to be obtained.
- 25X1A 4. Comment. The train on 27 September probably still carried troops to the field exercises of the IX Mtz Rifle Corps. The loadings on 29 September cannot be interpreted, as, because of this early date, they cannot possibly be linked with return shipments of troops.
- 25X1A 5. Comment. Although the Bittkau engineer training site was still occupied to some extent on 3 October, the engineer units of the Third Shock Army were probably out for field exercises.
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